

MOTOCROSS

A L I V E

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TEAM TEKA RED BULL KTM



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HOME AWAY FROM HOME

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FACTORY CHANCE

RON LECHIE

THE DOGGER

BRAD ANDERSON

MOTOCROSS VERSION OF ROCKY

**FIM WORLD MOTOCROSS
CHAMPIONSHIP PREVIEW**



ISSUE #4 - APRIL 2011

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COVER:

Antonio Cairoli is the big favorite to win the 2011 FIM World MX1 Championship. Here is the Italian in action

Photo: Gary Freeman

CONTENTS:

Clement Desalle bursts out of a sandy berm. The Belgian is expected to be Cairoli's biggest challenge

Photo: Ray Archer

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GALLERY

DAVID KNIGHT

British Enduro King David Knight will be looking to defend his World Enduro Championship this year and move a little closer to becoming the greatest Enduro rider to ever come out of Great Britain. Along with Paul Edmondson he has shown the World that British riders are capable of anything on the World scene

PHOTO BY JONTY EDMUNDS







2 Gallery

KEN ROCZEN

Ken Roczen has had the most exciting preparation for the 2011 FIM World Motocross Championship, but the question is has he had the best preparation. A new team, new bike and the pressure of being the favorite. Will the 16 year old be able to take victory in 2011

PHOTO BY FRANK HOPPEN









Gallery

STEVE RAMON

Two World titles to his name and Rockstar Suzuki rider Steve Ramon is still the guy in the shadows. Here he puts on the action for the Ray Archer camera. Archer the veteran of Grand Prix photography shoots for all the major teams and continues to produce brilliant work

PHOTO BY RAY ARCHER







MX1 & MX2 KTMS

Gary Freeman is one of the most creative photographers ever to shoot Motocross. He is also one of the very few who actually does photography outside Motocross. I've known Gary for more than a decade and I consider him a great friend. Here is a very cool image Gary shot in Spain. The bikes of Jeffrey Herlings and Antonio Cairoli

PHOTO BY GARY FREEMAN

4 GALLERY



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ZACH OSBORNE

Words by Geoff Meyer > Photos by Ray Archer

HOME AWAY FROM HOME

GROWING UP JUST DOESN'T ALWAYS HAVE A RIGHT OR A WRONG WAY. SOME TAKE THE HIGH ROAD AND SOME THE LOW ROAD. BEING BRILLIANT AT SCHOOL DOESN'T ALWAYS MEAN YOU WILL WIN AN AMAZING JOB ONCE YOUR SCHOOL DAYS ARE OVER, LIFE JUST ISN'T LIKE THAT, NOTHING CAN BE A SURE BET. LUCK ALSO PLAYS A MAJOR PART IN ANYONE'S MOVE FROM CHILDHOOD TO ADULTHOOD

Take the example of 20 year old American racer Zach Osborne. Osborne has been involved in racing since he was old enough to remember. He was brought into the World as the son of a professional Drag Racer and quickly caught the bug of "the need for speed". His early racing results were mixed to say the least and he pretty much ventured into the wrong path (results and condition wise), not that he meant it, it was just something that happened, or in many cases didn't happen. Osborne was considered one of the chosen few when he arrived on the professional AMA Motocross scene. His amateur performance left many people with the impression that he could make it in the major league, wins at Loretta Lynn's and an FIM World Junior Championship some of his major achievements. For whatever reason his road to the top was blocked by health issues, injuries and team problems and it took a journey across the Atlantic Ocean to Europe in 2008 to bring him back to the place many expected him to be years ago. Unless you have moved away from your family and put everything on the line, then you can't know how tough that is. Imagine being brought up in a warm family, having pretty much everything you need and all of a sudden it's off to Europe, alone, and racing riders you have never heard of.

Life as a Motocross racer takes you to some of the most beautiful and interesting places in the World. For Osborne that new place is Great Britain, coming from Chesterfield, South Carolina the Bike It Yamaha rider doesn't come from the wild side of America, so the move to England hasn't been too difficult.



I WANTED TO SHOW PEOPLE BACK HOME WHAT I COULD DO,
THAT FIRST WIN IN IRELAND SORT OF MADE ME SHOW THEM
WHAT I COULD DO, I GUESS IT WAS A LITTLE BIT LIKE REVENGE...

ZACH OSBORNE

HOME
AWAY
FROM
HOME

...I WANT TO BE THERE RIGHT FROM THE START. LAST YEAR I STARTED IN BULGARIA WITH AN 8-7 OR SOMETHING AND I KNOW NOW THAT I CAN'T START WITH THOSE TYPES OF RESULTS.

MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: Zach, how was your childhood? Did you spend a lot of time at the Motocross circuits in America?

OSBORNE: Actually my dad raced Drag cars professionally pretty much all my childhood. I always had dirt bikes and quads and I really wanted to be a motorcycle Drag racer. My first Drag was when I was like 3 days old. Drag racing was always Friday, Saturday and Sunday. When I started my amateur career and it took off I stopped going to the Drags, I think I started racing around when I was 10 or 12 years old, then I was racing pretty much every weekend. Every weekend my dad raced Drags and I went my own way and raced Motocross.

MX ILL: How did schooling go for you?

OSBORNE: Pretty much flying all around America to watch my dad racing I missed a lot of school, although I was a good student, but I had a lot of trouble with missing school, so then we started me doing home school. I was pretty good; usually I got good grades, like A and B grades. When I was at school I was a little in the middle the road kind of kid, not the cool kid, but not the nerd.

MX ILL: How did your professional Motocross career take off?

OSBORNE: I mean, in 2006 I did the Nationals pretty much on my father's money and I had some good rides. I got some good results in the first round and then at High Point I broke my thumb and then Southwick I crashed and hurt my thumb again. I had a three week break and was all healed up and ready to do. We came to Budds Creek and I had a great start and was up the front, but then I hit the wall and dropped back to 20th place.

MX ILL: I remember you getting a lot of bad press about that day in Budds Creek. How did that affect your career?

OSBORNE: It was a bad deal for me; I mean after that it was a downhill spiral. I met Jonathan Edwards and he sorted out my problems. The next year I had some 5th places and some 6th positions in the Supercross races, but then the Outdoors started I struggled again. My health and my fitness seemed ok, but I couldn't get the results. I ended up taking time off and trying to get it sorted out and then I came back and slipped a disc in my neck. That cost me more races, then I came back for the last two races and got two top ten finishes, but the people at KTM decided they wouldn't continue my contract so I ended up getting fired from that team.

MX ILL: Following the KTM deal you signed with another team, but this team seemed to be having major issues didn't it?

OSBORNE: Then I went to Yamaha of Troy, the team was based around Jason (Lawrence), which was fair enough, he was getting the results, but everyone in the team needed good bikes to get good results. I also got injured at the first round of the Supercross, but then came back and felt good for the Nationals, but at the first round of the Nationals I crashed and broke my wrist. Then I came back to ride, but the team didn't have any bikes for me to ride, it was kind of a mess.

MX ILL: From memory you then met Ash Kane and he helped you get sorted with Steve Dixon's team or not?

OSBORNE: Yes and after that I pretty much decided to come to Europe. Nothing went right for me in America. Coming to Europe wasn't a bad thing, because in America I had nothing seemed like nothing worse could happen what had happened before. I sort of felt like if I make a new start I could make something happen.

MX ILL: I remember your moto win at the Grand Prix of Ireland in 2008 and it was very impressive, you pretty much schooled Tyla Ratray for the win. Did you race those races trying to show people what you could do?

OSBORNE: At first it was like that, I wanted to show people back home what I could do, that first win in Ireland sort of made me show the people at KTM (USA) what I could do, I guess it was a little bit like revenge, but now I just want to win.

MX ILL: How is life in England, are you comfortable there?

OSBORNE: To be honest I was going down the road to go training and I was with Jason and I said to him it's not even that weird to be here anymore. It's not home, but it's normal. I have taken it on board. I am from the East Coast and it's not really European, but it's a lot more like Europe than California.

MX ILL: Do you know much about the history of American racers in Europe?

OSBORNE: I know about the 80's and 90's, I don't know pre 80's but I know about Trampas Parker and Bobby Moore and a few more. Like I said it's not that I am not into the pre 1980's, but I was into stuff like Jeff Ward and Ricky Johnson and stuff.

MX ILL: What will make the difference for you in 2011, what have you improved on?

OSBORNE: Going in I know more what to expect. Before last year I had never completed a full season, the most races I had done in concession was probably like five, so that is a big change. I made some big changes in the winter; I lost like 30 pounds from after the des nations until now. I think that will make a big difference and my fitness. It wasn't that I was big, just bulky before and I put a lot of effort in the winter. It might not show straight away, but I think by the time we get to Bulgaria I want to be there right from the start. Last year I started in Bulgaria with an 8-7 or something and I know now that I can't start with those types of results.





ZACH OSBORNE

MY PLAN IS TO COME OUT
SWINGING AS HARD AS I
POSSIBLY CAN, IF I DON'T MAKE
A PODIUM AT THE FIRST ROUND
I WILL BE PRETTY MAD...

AWAY
FROM
HOME

MX ILL: How helped you get to your current weight?

OSBORNE: I worked with the same guy who helped me a few years back when I was having trouble, Jonathan Edwards and also another guy from www.endurocoach.com over the winter. Jason (Dougan) and I spend six weeks training in Las Vegas in high altitude, and every day in the gym and running. I also cut down the calories in the food I took in every day, and just tried to keep my energy up as good as I could to get my weight down to what is now is.

MX ILL: Do you still have to watch what you eat to remain at the good weight?

OSBORNE: I can now maintain the weight pretty easily, in fact I am surprised how easy it has been to maintain the weight and not get bigger again. Obviously I watch what I eat, but I am only human and sometimes I have to eat some garbage.

MX ILL: Last year wasn't a bad year for you though was it?

OSBORNE: I mean last year I was fourth in the World and British Champion and that is pretty good, I'd never had a season like that before. It was also my first ever full season and it's something I can build on and something I learnt a whole lot from.

MX ILL: Seeing how Roczen rode at the Motocross of Nations and how he rides in the Grand Prix's. How can you compete with him? He seems like he might be nearly unbeatable.

OSBORNE: He isn't unbeatable and Marvin did it a lot last year. I think it's just a matter of being at front of every moto. Plus he's done a lot of racing already at the front with his Supercross and riding the 350. It's done a lot for him publicity wise and I am sure he has learnt a lot from it, but his season is going to be a long one, he will be racing a long time, like eight months by the time we get to the half way point in the season. I wouldn't wish anything bad on anyone and if I am going to become World Champion I want everyone racing. I am not sure anyone can run a season like he will have, so long.

MX ILL: Do you feel like you have to jump straight on Roczen in Bulgaria?

OSBORNE: My plan is to come out swinging as hard as I possibly can, if I don't make a podium at the first round I will be pretty mad, that is something I am depending on and something I can build on. I want to be on the podium at every race and I think with my new condition and the way the bike will be I can do that. We have worked hard in the winter.

MX ILL: You often show good speed at the Motocross of Nations. What does that event mean to you?

OSBORNE: I think the Motocross of Nations can show some guys off who might not be noticed usually at this event. For me it's such a big crowd, it's the last race of the year so you can give it everything, you don't have to worry about anything. In Colorado it was in America and all the leading teams were there, so for sure I wanted to do well. I wanted to be on my game.

MX ILL: Can you explain your personality?

OSBORNE: Some people say I am boring, in fact more than one thinks that. I mean I think I have a good character, but like I hang out with Jason (Dougan) and he's pretty much around me more than anyone else. I wouldn't say he is wild but he's a bit crazy, he isn't boring, but he calls me boring all the time. If something is a big sketchy then I am not going to do it. I used to be a lot worse about worrying things.

MX ILL: Who will be the tough guys to beat this year, I mean obviously Roczen, Herlings, Searle, Anstie, Paulin, but who else?

OSBORNE: I mean there are eight guys who can win Grand Prix's this year. I mean with Arnaud (Tonus) on the team this year that is a good thing. I think we can prepare and do some damage, he was strong last year and had some really good rides at the end of the season. I think he can take some pressure off me. With a younger guy in the team I was like the hold down the fort guy. If I didn't do well and the second rider was just scoring points then it was a bad weekend for the team. Anytime there is a second decent rider, or a good rider it takes a lot of pressure off.

MX ILL: But there is now pressure coming from your team-mate at the races. Tonus will be wanting to beat you won't he?

OSBORNE: In a way you can say that, but it's a better pressure. He is going to be fast, but I think I can probably beat him. I will just give it my best in every moto and get good starts. I have done a lot of starts in the winter.



[ZACH OSBORNE]

HOME
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...AND IF YOU SEE HOW MUCH ZACH HAS
IMPROVED IN THE LAST TWO YEARS YOU CAN
SEE HE NEEDED TO BE GIVEN A CHANCE.



ASH KANE ON OSBORNE

Ash Kane is one of the true historians of the sport. Kane has worked in the Motocross industry for longer than he can remember and was a critical part of Zach Osborne coming to race the FIM World Motocross Championship. We decided to ask Ash how he got Zach involved in the Bike It Cosworth Yamaha team.

"I was having a coffee with Robin 'Doc Wobbles' Walters in a coffee shop (that's where they serve coffee not weed) in America and Zach walked in. Rob introduced me to him and Zach asked if I wanted to go out to the Yamaha test track and watch him ride.

"We went out there and I could see that he was fast, but there was some tension within the team. I told him then if he wanted to come to Europe then we could find a place for him.

"Shortly after we had contact and wrote down on a piece of paper what we could do for him, we agreed pretty quickly. You know in America riders (based in America) don't get a second chance and if you see how much Zach has improved in the last two years you can see he needed to be given a chance.

"What you have to realize with Zach is not only his moto win in Ireland or his GP win in Turkey, but how he did at the MXoN, in one moto he crashed on the first corner and came through to pass Tim Ferry. Zach has a lot of potential and I think in Europe he has been given the chance to reach his potential." »



MX1 & MX2 HEAD-TO-HEAD

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2011 DATES & VENUES

ROUND 1 — 2ND & 3RD APRIL — FATCAT MOTOPARC

ROUND 2 — 7th & 8th May — Landrake

ROUND 3 — 11th & 12th June — Whitby

ROUND 4 — 30th & 31st July — Canada Heights

ROUND 5 — 27th & 28th August — Hawkstone Park

ROUND 6 — 3rd & 4th September — Desertmartin, NI

ROUND 7 — 24th & 25th September — TBC

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ANTONIO CAIROLI MOTORCYCLE DIARIES!

Words by Antonio Cairoli > Photo by Gary Freeman

AFTER AMERICA I WENT TO SARDINIA FOR A WEEK TO TRAIN... SARDINIA IS THE PERFECT LOCATION TO PREPARE YOURSELF FOR THE SEASON! THE WEATHER IS GREAT AND THE ISLAND HAS A LOT OF PERFECT TRAINING TRACKS. SO IT WAS A WEEK WITH HARD, HARD TRAINING ON AND OFF THE BIKE FOR ME!

One day for me in Sardinia looks like;

8.00 Breakfast; espresso

9.00 Running

10.30 Start to the track for mototraining

11.00 Mototraining

13.00 Lunch; Sandwich

17.00 Finish mototraining

18.00 In the Hotel to the Gym

20.00 Dinner antipasti, pasta with sea fruit, fish and tiramisu

23.30 back in my hotel room, Sleep!

After Sardinia we went with the whole KTM team to Spain! It where three full days of photo shooting and training... We did a few photo shoots on different locations and a cool photo shoot in the dark!

In the early morning I went to the sea for fishing with my new teammate Jeremy van Horenbeek (MX2)! It was fun, and days like this are nice to spend some free time with your teammates and to get to know each other better!

One regular day for me in Spain Look like;

9.00 Breakfast; Espresso and fruit

9.30 Running on the beach

11.00 Fishing with Jeremy

12.30 Leaving to the track

13.00 Lunch; sandwich

13.30 Start mototraining

16.00 to another location for more photos

20.00 Dinner with the team; Paella, meat, salad and dessert

23.30 Sleep

After Spain I flew to Milan for two busy days of visiting new sponsors, photo shooting, interviews etc!

A day for me in Milan looked like;

5.30 wake up and start to the airport

7.00 Arrive at the airport

7.30 Breakfast; Espresso

10.00 arrived by plane in Milan

11.00 Interview Sportweek

12.00 Lunch; Pasta and salad

13.00 Photo shooting my new Jewellery line

15.00 Visit my sponsor Kopron

16.00 Live interview Sportitalia

18.00 Visit Red Bull Italia, video interview

21.00 Dinner with Red Bull; antipasti, Pasta Carbonara, and steak

0.30 Arrive back in the hotel, Sleep!

So here you have an idea of three days in my last three weeks!

Do You want to follow me and my busy but great life, follow me on

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TC222

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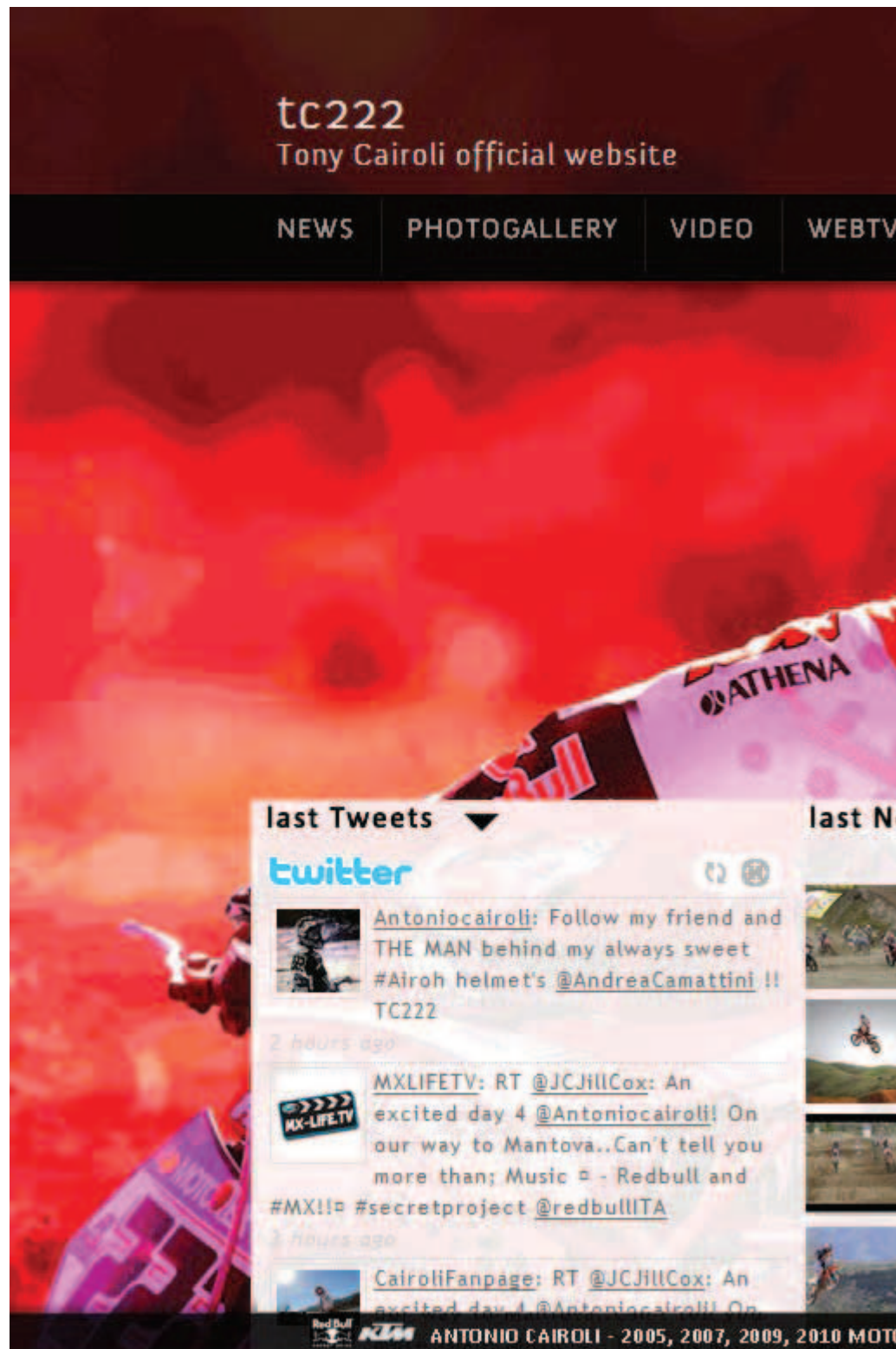
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Tony Cairoli_222 - MX1

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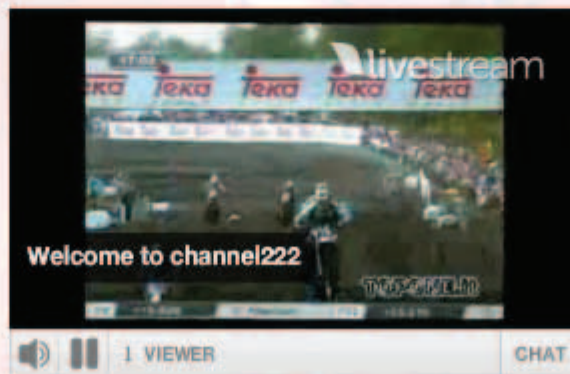
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Milestone Training Video by Transworld Motocross

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CROSS WORLD CHAMPION



JEM SX CHAMPION - 2009 MX1 WORLD CHAMPION - 2010 MX1 WORLD CHAMPION...

GRAND PRIX OF BULGARIA *David Bulmer* **DAVID BULMER**

AT ABOUT A SIMILAR STAGE OF LAST YEAR, I DECIDED THAT I WAS GOING TO MAKE THE TRIP TO GO AND SEE THE FIRST GP OF THE YEAR IN BULGARIA. NO BIG DEAL RIGHT? ESPECIALLY AS I'D BEEN THERE BEFORE IN 2008 AND KNEW THE LAY OF THE LAND... WELL WRONG, BECAUSE THIS TIME I INTENDED TO DRIVE THE 1800 MILES.

Now as you may have read in previous columns, I do like a bit of a drive and I certainly like an adventure so I figured this would be a good opportunity to expand my European horizons and take in some sights in countries that normally would be nowhere near my radar.

The planning stage involved finding out exactly what I'd need to travel through the countries en-route, and that turned out to be quite substantial. Austria, Hungary, Romania, Czech Republic, Slovenia and Bulgaria all require a 'ticket' to use the motorways in their country, ranging from about \$5 to \$20. And don't even bother trying to drive in Serbia – not only do insurance companies exclude that country from their policies; you also need to buy a 100EU pass (back-hander) to cross the border. This was turning into a tricky journey.

So with the route planned, all that needed to be performed was a basic spot-check on my vehicle of choice – a 1991 1.0L Volkswagen Polo. Now this you're probably thinking that this vehicle may not be the best choice to make a journey of nearly 4000 miles, in the space of a little over a week, but I had confidence in German engineering. In hindsight, I probably shouldn't have done.

All was going well; I'd got through France, Belgium, Germany and Austria and was most of the way through Hungary when problems started arising. I had just left a Tesco's in Szeged (who knew they had Tesco's in Hungary?) when I noticed the temperature in my car was dangerously high, and sure enough, opening the bonnet revealed I had zero water in there. Thankfully a friendly Hun who spoke little English got out a 2L bottle of water and proceeded to pour it all into my reserve. This got me to a local garage where I bought another 16L, just to be safe.

Now I was in Romania, and driving conditions are completely different to Hungary, gone are the motorways, dual lanes, decent roads, flat terrain and road signs and replacing them are places really not suitable for a 17yr old car with over-heating problems. Each hill was a nervous sweat, watching the temperature gauge rise as quickly as the incline, praying that they I'd reach the top before boiling point was reached.

This was pretty much my life for the rest of the journey (approx 450miles) and other than a brief unwanted excursion into Bucharest; I made it relatively pain-free. The heating problem didn't seem too bad now as long as I took regular breaks and suited me fine. However, after my arrival at my hostel in Veliko Tarnovo I encountered more problems – my car failed to start. It was Saturday morning and I was stranded just 30 miles from the track, having negotiated 1650 miles. I was less than impressed. Thankfully, every man, woman, child, man-friend and dog stays in Veliko for the GP so I was still able to get back to and from the track thanks to Mel Pocock. But getting back to England suddenly seemed a lot tougher proposition.

Luckily the people running the hostel were awesome and they found me a mechanic to fix the starting problem of the car, which involved swapping out some faulty wire and an alternator. Job done... or so I thought.

Originally my plan had been to take in the Italian GP at Mantova after this race but that plan had pretty much evaporated with the original radiator water, so homeward bound it was. Things were still a stop-start affair, but I was confident of getting home safely. That was until my car failed to start again in my now favourite place of Tesco's carpark, Szeged. It was now apparent that the battery in my Volkswagen was failing so it was no longer charging as I was driving. Simple solution, don't turn the engine off. Unfortunately a solution I couldn't perform as that meant my car would over-heat. I was stuck between a rock and a hard-place and a long way from home.

Long story short, taking 10 minute power naps after every 60miles, for 36hrs straight results in a smashed up Polo sitting on a scrap-heap in Schärlding, Austria.

Needless to say this I'm taking the Easyjet option this year. And while it may not be the most adventurous way of travelling, it'll definitely mean I'll get to enjoy the racing a bit more and that's something I think everyone is excited about. Will Roczen be motocross-ready after his supercross success? Will Cairoli be able to hold off returning prodigal son Ben Townley? Can the English duo of Tommy Searle and Max Anstie show that moving to America was a good idea? And that's just the half of it.

The first races of the year are always worth watching, just perhaps not worth a 4000 miles roundtrip in a 17yr old car... «

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Round 2 27 March
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Round 3 17 April
Lyng, Norfolk
MX1 / MX2 / MXY2

Round 4 1 May
Milton Park, Northampton
MX1 / MX2 / MXY2

Round 5 26 June
Desertmartin, N. Ireland
MX1 / MX2 / MXY2

Round 6 24 July
Foxhill, Swindon
MX1 / MX2 / Vets

Round 7 14 August
Duns, Scotland
MX1 / MX2 / MXY2

Round 8 2 October
Hawkstone Park
MX1 / MX2 / Vets

MISS IT!

Michael Leib interview

CHASING THE AMERICAN DREAM IN EUROPE

It's been a while since an American racer can call himself a World Motocross Champion. Nearly 20 years ago, way back in 1994 Bobby Moore swept the World's best 125cc riders to capture America their seventh World MX title. Following in the footsteps of Brad Lackey, Danny Laporte, Trampas Parker, Donny Schmit and Moore many Americans have tried to claim that eight World title, but all have come up short.

Words by Geoff Meyer > Photos courtesy Michael Leib







CHASING
THE
AMERICAN
DREAM
IN EUROPE



Michael Leib interview

Names like Scott Sheak, Jeff Dement, Mike Brown, Zach Osborne and Jimmy Albertson are just a handful that crossed the Atlantic Ocean to take on the Europeans; they all failed in their attempt to win that elusive World title, but many times American riders left Europe as better riders and more matured as people.

Brown was probably the most capable of the recent bunch of American's racing on the FIM World Motocross Championship and his third place finish in 2000 behind Grant Langston and James Dobb set-up his victory in the 2001 AMA 125cc Championship. It was the experience in his Grand Prix venture that built Brown up to compete at the highest level in America. Another young American Michael Leib is hoping that the same mentality can help him achieve what Brown has achieved and then a whole lot more.

It seems like there is no better education than one of travel and adventure. For 19 years old Leib the experience of travelling around Europe has given him enough experience both in life and as a racer and with that experience he can achieve a lot in the sport of Motocross.

Having already put in the hard miles in his debut year in Europe the former American amateur champion has his goals set high and isn't scared to work hard to achieve those goals.

Holed up in a small village in Italy and with a Husqvarna factory machine at his service Leib has every chance to shock the World in 2011. He might not win a World title, but there is every chance that he will position himself as a contender in the very competitive FIM World MX2 Championship.



MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: I remember talking to Ben Townley many years ago and he mentioned how he used to cry a lot when he first came to Europe. He was something like 16 years old and riding for a German team. He didn't know the language and was 20,000 miles away from his parents. Have you experienced anything like that?

LEIB: I don't want to sound like a spoilt kid; I mean for sure I can relate to that. It's difficult, everything is good with the team and I am surrounded by really nice people, but at the same time I ride, train and then after that you pretty much do your own thing, cooking and stuff. I miss my family and girlfriend, but what doesn't kill you makes you stronger.

MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: Has it been as I mentioned how Townley found it?

LEIB: Sure, I have gone to bed with tears in my eyes. There have been some moments. It puts you back into the question of why you do it and why you love to do it and what will you sacrifice to get where you want to be. For sure there are moments when it's negative and you would rather not be here, and some things seem so stupid, why we put ourselves through this, why do we do this to try and reach our dream, but at the end of the day I would rather Chase my dream than anything else. I will put that before anything.

MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: Has anyone been out to visit you so far this year?

LEIB: My mum was here for the first two weeks that was good to get the situation with my apartment and stuff organized. Since she left I have been pretty much on my own and just riding and training, you know.

MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: Have you been able to make any friends in your time here?

LEIB: No, I don't really have anyone close to where I live. Jacky Vimond and his girlfriend, they are good friends and I talk to them a bit. Also my mechanic in the states was from Ireland, and I have some friends in Great Britain, Norway and Denmark.

MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: At the end of last season you pretty much were

searching everywhere for a job, what was the plan if you didn't get a job? I've exchanged e-mails with your dad a few times, how important is he in your career.

LEIB: My father owns Rocket Exhausts in America and he can build me a great motorcycle, and our plan B was pretty much we would go to the races with our truck and trailer and do Supercross and hopefully get picked up for a Motocross deal, we were going to do it anyway. In the states there isn't much going around at the moment. I am really thankful I have what I have here in Europe and without Bud Racing from last year I wouldn't have this rider with Husqvarna.

MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: What else is difficult about changing from racing at home to racing in Europe?

LEIB: The difficult thing for me is I was thinking that I had a good training schedule back home in America and I really had that every day, I figured I would jump back into the same routine once I go into the right time zone here. I figured I just needed to maintain my physical, training and mental standpoint, but to make all those things work together has been difficult. At home I would have a mechanic and my trainer was always with me, and that way you get a good base. For me being here alone that's been difficult, it's a new team and my mechanic is really cool and my team manager and team mate were really good. Everyone is helpful at the track, but for the riding standpoint, to have it like it was back home it probably the most difficult.

MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: Is this your first time living out of the family home?

LEIB: I obviously had my experience last year. I still live at home with my parents when I am in America. In France last year I had my girlfriend with me, but that was my first experience of living out of home.

Motocross Illustrated: Having travelled a bit in my life I can't imagine what it's like to live in a country where you are all alone and nobody to talk with.



LEIB: That is pretty much it that is the most difficult thing. I mean we live in a really nice village, up in the Mountains, it's quiet and sometimes there isn't much to do. My team-mate Lupino he lives here and he has his friends and pretty much does his thing, and I just come back to my apartment and hang out, watch television, cook dinner and then get up in the morning and do it all over again.

Right now I am trying to get somebody to come out and be my man friend (laughing), hang out with me a bit. My girlfriend was going to come out, but now she is coming out after Brazil. My parents will probably come out after Brazil also. We will see.

MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: How is the set-up at Husqvarna?

LEIB: That has been one of the things I have been surprised with. I mean five or six years ago Husqvarna was a pretty well known company, also in the states. Then they went away for a while and I was not sure how it would turn out. It is so professional, from the workshop, also Husqvarna near Milano they have a great facility. We have some things we need to study and fix, but they are really pushing and really working hard to make it work. I am so happy to know I have a really supportive team behind me.

MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: What are the positives about the bike?

LEIB: The positives the bike handles really well, its super lightweight and it turns really well. The motor is strong, but we are focusing on trying to get the motor a little stronger. I think in three weeks we will have something that is really good.

MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: What did you enjoy about 2010?

LEIB: Last year it was difficult to get comfortable, it was a huge culture shock for me and I never got my feet planted. I liked Sweden and I liked Latvia, I loved Lommel and Lierop (laughing). I was being sarcastic about those two places, it's not easy for a guy from California, but I am going to learn to love it. I was planning on moving to Belgium later in the year and staying there until the end of the year.

MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: Belgium is a great place to be based, more tracks and more riders, you might find your man friend in Belgium.

LEIB: I mean that is where all the GP guys go, and living here it's me and Lupino and in Belgium everyone is based there. It's going to be key for me to get up there.

MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: Do you know much of the history of the FIM World Motocross Championship?

LEIB: I think I told you before I didn't really know anything about GP's. I mean I knew Stefan Everts was a 10 time World Champion, he is right? Last year I learnt a lot. Now I have learnt a lot, Jacky Vimond told me a lot of stories, and it was nice to talk to him about that. I know now about Chad Reed, Grant Langston, Ben Townley, I know they all raced here.

MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: The MX2 class is a very competitive class with guys like Roczen, Herlings and Osborne. Can you run with those guys, or beat them?

LEIB: If I ride like I do at home, like I said before it's a bit about the schedule. I am not saying I will beat these guys every day of the week, but if everything is going to plan, I think it will be interesting to see. If I can get a good start it will be interesting.

MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: Times are tough in America if you consider what riders were earning a few years ago. A positive note it seems to have given a lot of guys their hunger back. What is your opinion?

LEIB: If you look at guys like Tedesco, these types of guys are doing it because they loved it, they are making money, but everyone now has changed. I mean if you look at Josh Hansen he has changed so much. I mean back when he first raced the money was good, and now he is making less, but he is riding better and harder. I mean he won a race two weeks ago with a broken hand, nobody would have believed that two years ago. He is doing it because he needs the money, he wants it now and he knows he has to make it happen now, because if he doesn't he won't have a ride next year.

MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: That rockstar mentality is also gone. Most are working hard on their trade now.

LEIB: For sure, that is the way it should be, if a guy is out there with natural talent, but isn't putting the effort in, what is the point. For me you put everything into the sport, no matter what happens, you do everything you can. At the end of the day it's all about how bad you want it.

MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: Your father seems like an important part of your career. How is he doing in the present climate in America?

LEIB: He has had his business I think for 8 years. He started it in China and that sort of fell through. About three years ago he redid his company and right now he does everything in house. He has an East Coast team and a West Coast rider, they are building motors and pipes and he builds a good bike. Right now he can focus everything on that, but he is still up until three or four o'clock in the morning waiting to see if I made it through my training day.

MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: You seem like a hard working rider, did you learn that from your father?

LEIB: Every since I was in second grade he always told me no matter what I do in life to always be a champion. From the moment I get up in the morning from the moment I go to bed, be it your attitude, your training or your riding. Pretty much that is all I know. I am not a champion yet, but hard work pays off and I feel like I can get there. I am focusing on my dream and chasing it with everything I've got.

MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: What has been the highlight of your career? I understood you did okay in the amateurs in some races.

LEIB: I won Loretta Lynn B-stock 2009, which was my biggest moment. Also in 2003 I won at the World Mini's in the 65 Open class. I am a small rider and everything in the amateur is pretty much based on age. I was always a small rider and I got hurt a lot, it ruined me. I broke too many bones to count and that really put a hold on my career.

MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: Have you been keeping an eye on Ken Roczen while he's been in America?

LEIB: I have been watching him, I thought he was crazy riding the 350, but he is over in the states and he's doing it. I have a lot of respect for that kid. I mean it's similar to me coming to Europe, he doesn't really know anybody and he's really pulling through over there. I think he is pretty relaxed. I mean he only has two eight minute practice, a qualifier and a main event, so you don't have much time to adjust, but he's doing really well.

MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: How would you describe the FIM World Motocross Championships?

LEIB: I think the tracks are really rough over here. I really like the two 35 minute practices and the two day format and it's really professionally ran. I know when I got back to the states it won't be an issue running their races and I know the rough tracks over here will help my riding.

MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: Is your eventual goal to get back to America and race there?

LEIB: For me, sure I want to go to America, it's kind of funny, and I am doing to backwards to other people. I mean I want to win a Supercross and win an Outdoor. I will go back to the states, but while I am here I want to improve as a rider and also as a person. I look at guys like Grant Langston, or anyone who has been over here and they are strong and mature and they are ready for any situation. I want to go back to America knowing I have completed all that.

MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: What is your plan for the coming weeks before the opening Grand Prix?

LEIB: I race the four Italian Championship rounds and then straight to Bulgaria. I don't know much about the Italian Championship, I have tried to read up about it, but it will just be going there and trying to do my best. We also want to do suspension testing and other testing. I will give it 100%, but I won't go out and hurt myself to try and win it. ■



LET THE CH




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At 44 years of age Ron Lechien is at peace with himself. The one time wild child of American Motocross has made the long road to adulthood and despite a misjudged youth the former Motocross des Nations victor and multiple AMA Supercross and Motocross main event winner can look back on a career of success and huge support from the Motocross community

Story by Geoff Meyer images by Paul Buckley

Throughout the 80's, Lechien's fluid effortless style set him apart from the rest of the riders. To this day, Lechien remains one of the most naturally gifted riders the sport has ever seen. With 25 combined SX and MX national wins, two USGPs and one MXDN win, Lechien has a permanent place in MX history as one of the top-20 most successful riders of all time. We caught up with Lechien last week and he gave us some information on his USGP racing career and his MXoN victories.



THE DOGGER

RON LECHIE

The Dogger

interview



ew

GREEN THOUGHTS

On a full works Kawasaki 250, Ron Lechien blasts a berm in the cocoa brown "giant sand" of Southwick, Massachusetts. The Dogger rode for Team Kawasaki from 1987 through 1989, winning four Nationals, three Supercrosses, the 1989 500cc USGP and the 1988 Motocross des Nations in France. For all intents purposes, Lechien's star-crossed career ended on October 1, 1989 when he badly broke his leg at the Steel City National. "Yeah, 1989 was the last year I was full factory at Kawasaki," says Lechien. "Kawasaki offered me a ride for the 1990 500 Nationals, but I was not ready to race at that time and the partying was still going on pretty hard."

LOGGER RON LECHIE

MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: RON THANKS FOR YOUR TIME. YOU WERE PRETTY MUCH KNOWN AS A WILD GUY BACK IN YOUR RACING CAREER. WHAT HAPPENED THERE?

LECHIE: My father was pretty strict and when I was young it was all racing, racing, racing. Once I was old enough to leave home I was gone, bought my own place and pretty much started having fun. I lost track, got caught up with the wrong people. First it was just smoking a bit of weed, once a week, then twice a week, then every day, then I would try something else. The people I got in contact with knew people who had other stuff. I mean I was trying to give it everything I had as a racer, but I know I wasn't going to the races 100% ready to race.

MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: WHAT DID YOU REMEMBER ABOUT YOUR RACING HERO'S BACK IN THE DAY?

LECHIE: When I was young I used to read about Roger De Coster and the Grand Prix riders. I mean he was obviously the man and to ride for him at Honda and also at the Motocross des Nations in 1988 was a big deal for me. He was a good team manager and really nice person. Obviously my big hero's were American guys, like Marty Smith, Bob Hannah, Tony Distefano, Jimmy Weinert.

MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST RECOLLECTION OF RACING IN THE USGP?

LECHIE: I remember my first ever Grand Prix, it was in 1984 and it was at Unadilla. Now Unadilla wasn't like anything I had raced, as you probably know the circuit was covered in grass and once the grass wore away it was rocky and hard. I won the 250cc USGP in 1984 and also rode the support race for the 500cc USGP in 1984, which was at Carlsbad. The following year I went back to Carlsbad for the 500cc Grand Prix, and I did the Grand Prix there also in 1986 and 87, then the GP moved to Hollister in 1988 and I got to win that one at Hollister in 1989. I also rode the USGP at Glen Helen in 1992, but I was just a privateer then and not really on my game anymore, I think I got 13th or 14th or something.

MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: WAS THERE A GP RIDER YOU LIKED, SOMEBODY WHO YOU LOOK UP TO IN YOUR RACING CAREER?

LECHIE: I mean I always looked at Dave Thorpe, his gear always looked good and his style was clean. When I would get the Motocross Action and see his photos with his number one plate and his factory Honda with his AXO gear, I really enjoyed that.

MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: CAN YOU REMEMBER WHICH GP RIDERS YOU BATTLED WHEN YOU WON IN 84?

LECHIE: I mean I can't really remember which GP riders were at that first Grand Prix in 1984; I went 2-1 for the win (Lechien won with 2-1, second was Bob Hannah with 3-2, and third was Mark Barnett with 1-5, in fact American riders dominated the top five). I usually raced the 500 guys and I knew who they were, riders like Dave Thorpe and Eric Geboers.

MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: THE MOTOCROSS OF NATIONS, THAT WAS ALWAYS A BIG EVENT FOR AMERICA. YOU GOT TO RIDE FOR TEAM USA IN 1985 AND 1988. I REMEMBER THAT 88 EVENT IN VILLARS SOUS ECOT IN FRANCE AND IT WAS A BIG PERFORMANCE FROM YOU.

LECHIE: Yes, I rode well there. I remember the huge crowd and fighting with Jeff Leisk. I had ridden against Leisk before and I felt I had his number. Funny I was talking to J.M. Bayle about that race just last week at a JT launch. He did really well on the 125 machine and I remember hearing him behind me in that race, that buzzing sound of the 125. He told me that Honda put some extra parts on the bike for that race, parts they didn't dare use during the season and it made a big difference. You know at this year's MXdN I will probably be travelling over with J.M.B for a special JT launch. I am looking forward to that; I had a lot of fans in France.

MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: HOW ABOUT BERCY, WHAT WAS YOUR MEMORY OF THAT PLACE?

LECHIE: I rode Bercy many times, it was different to what we were used to, all the lights and it was a big show and the crowd were crazy, but it wasn't always a good race for me. One year I was jumped on by Ricky Johnson and broke my nose, he said he didn't do it on purpose, but I woke up in a French hospital and didn't feel that great. I also won there one year, that was a special race.

MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: WHAT MADE YOU CHANGE, FROM WILD GUY TO BUSINESSMAN?

LECHIE: When I started working, after my racing career was over I realized I needed to get my game together. Waking up in the morning and going to work was a wakeup call for me, but I knew I had to change and I knew I had to get peoples respect back.

RON LECHIE ARRIVING ON THE SCENE IN 1983 - BY ERIC JOHNSON

For the 1983 season, Team Yamaha hired a 16-year-old kid from El Cajon, California, named Ron Lechien to contest the AMA 125cc National MX Championship Series. Lechien had turned 16 in December of 1982, less than a month before the '83 season-opening Anaheim Supercross. Back then there was no AMA 125cc East/West Regional Championship—it would arrive in 1985—so Yamaha decided to keep their young rider on the sidelines until he got some supercross practice in.

"Atlanta was my very first supercross," says Lechien, who today works with his father, Dick Lechien, at Maxima in El Cajon. "We were concentrating on the 125cc Nationals that year and

Yamaha kept me out of the first three races. I don't think they wanted to throw me to the wolves too early!

"Atlanta was just the full-on mudder," says Lechien, who was affectionately referred to as "Dogger" not for only his laid-back attitude, but also because le chien means "the dog" in French. "I rode the last-c chance qualifier and didn't even qualify. With all the ruts and mud—this was the old Fulton County Stadium, which didn't have a roof—it was like a slot-car track. I watched the main event from the tunnel. It was raining so hard, I couldn't even see across the track! Mark Barnett won the main and I thought he was an animal."

Lechien would compete at Daytona, Dallas, Pontiac, Kansas City, and Washington, D.C., steadily

gaining confidence and working on the fundamentals of riding 250cc supercross against the likes of David Bailey, Broc Glover, Jeff Ward, Johnny O'Mara, and (before he got hurt) Rick Johnson. Then, on Saturday morning, June 11, Lechien idled out onto Orlando Citrus Bowl supercross track for practice.

"I was gaining confidence and felt better with each supercross I rode," Lechien explains. "When I first turned pro, my dad stopped going to the races with me. As an amateur, I had spent so much time with my dad that the way our relationship was, it was like I always wanted to do good for my dad. Orlando was the first supercross he actually went to with me my rookie season."

Along with such fierce competitors as Bob Hannah,





THE BIG COME UP

Wandering out of the same sun-scorched badlands of El Cajon, California that served home for Broc Glover and Rick Johnson, in 1983 rookie Ron Lechien and his #224 OW 125 Yamaha – complete with a rotary valve engine – stunned the American motocross nation. Racing in what many considered the most bitterly fought championship in U.S. motocross history, the 16 year-old took on battle hardened veterans Mark Barnett, Johnny O'Mara and Jeff Ward, defeating them Lake Whitney, Texas, Lakewood, Colorado and Millville, Minnesota. "Before the season started, I was pretty familiar with Wardy, O'Show and Barnett as I had raced them quite a few times in Golden State Series races and local pro events. I did respect them, but was by no means intimidated by them," offers the Dogger. "I just wanted to beat them – and anyone else who was standing in my way – of being a MX Star."

Mark Barnett, and Mike Bell (plus all those other guys mentioned above), Lechien took his time learning the Citrus Bowl circuit. "The way the track was configured, there was a start, a chicane, some whoops, then three or four pretty good-size jumps," he remembers. "In practice, I doubled one of them. After I did, I noticed that nobody else was doing it, so I decided right then and there not to do it again."

"Back then the teams weren't filming practice and stuff like they do now, so guys like Johnny O' and David [Bailey] didn't even know that I had that double down," Lechien laughs. "In fact, I didn't even do the double in my heat races. I saved it for the main event! Later that evening came the 20-lap main."

"I got a pretty good start—I think I was in about

fourth," the Dogger says. "When we came up to the double jump, I hit it, flew by a bunch of guys, and landed right next to O'Mara, who was leading the race. Johnny lost the front end in the next turn and I was in the lead."

"After that, I put my head down and took off," Lechien continues. "It didn't take long for me to build up a 15- to 20-second lead. I rode conservatively, watched my lines, made sure I stayed up, and the rest was history." The 16 year-old Californian on the #224 black-and-yellow Yamaha YZ250 had won his first professional AMA event. Shockingly, it came in a 250cc supercross—Lechien would win his first 125 National eight days later at Lake Whitney, Texas.

"I was ecstatic with the wins," he says. "I was like,

'I did it!' I proved to myself that I could run with those guys. What was weird, though, was that it was so easy. It was mind-boggling to me that it was so easy to win that race. I guess it was always like that for me. All of my best races were when I felt like it was so easy to win. Whenever I would ride my hardest and give it all I had, I'd finish in fifth or sixth."

Lechien would go on to win 25 more AMA events (10 125cc Nationals, six 250cc Nationals, two 500cc Nationals, and seven 250cc supercrosses), as well as the 1985 AMA 125cc National Championship before retiring in the late 1980s. Despite some ups and downs in his personal Lechien remains one of the most charismatic figures in American motocross history.

ERIC JOHNSON AND DAVEY COOMBS COMMENTS ON LECHIE

We are lucky enough to have two of the best journalists in American Motocross give their views on the career of Ron Lechien. Eric Johnson and Davey Coombs have been friends for years and have been following Motocross since they were kids. Eric and Davey started RacerX magazine together and their passion for the sport is refreshing. Johnson still does features for RacerX, but is also involved with Monster Energy in America. As for Davey, he remains the main man at RacerX and also leads MXSports, the promoters of the AMA Nationals. Both know their Motocross.

ERIC JOHNSON'S COMMENTS ON LECHIE

"More than any racer in American motocross history, Ron Lechien just fascinated me. What funny is that once I started to write for Racer X full-time, Ron was the one and only rider I had never met? But I'll get to that later. I was able to watch Ron race many a time, but there are a few races that really stand out. First and foremost was the 1983 National at Mount Morris. What's crazy is that I talked to Ron about this at the recent San Diego Supercross. He was only 16 years old – just a few years older than me – and as a fan, I was already in awe of him. He seemed to come out of nowhere. In the second moto at Mount Morris, Ron pulled the holeshot on his #224 Yamaha and took off like a scalded cat. Meanwhile, Mark Barnett – who had terrorized the class for years – was down in the first turn. Barnett mounted an incredible charge and with two laps left to go in the race, it started to rain. Ron was still in front, but Barnett was closing fast. With half a lap to go, Barnett passed him. I was pissed. But not as pissed as my brother who kicked the Styrofoam cooler with brought to the race with us, smashing it to smithereens.

"That same year, I attuned my first supercross ever. It was at Three River Stadium in Pittsburgh. Ron looked so rad that night. He was dressed in all-white with this sick yellow and black Yamaha helmet. Due to bad luck he failed to qualify that night, but my brother and I went and found him in the pits and he was super cool to us and signed our programs. I still have that program.

"In the years to come I watched Ron win the Hollister Hills 500cc USGP, but perhaps the most memorable race came in the winter of 1987. It was at a CMC race at Adelanto, California. It rained and rained and rained, and when it came time for the first moto, the Dogger led his bitter rival Rick Johnson the whole way and beat him to the checkered flag. Rick was so mad (I don't know why); he went looking for Ron after the race. Ron sat in the cab of the Kawasaki box van and Rick kept pounding on the window, demanding he come out, Ron would roll the window down just a bit and say, "No". People were laughing. Rick finally complexly lost it, got the door open and punched Ron in the face. It was all just crazy. I don't think anyone has ever written that story because there were about 200 people at the race!

"It's now 2011 and with some work I do with Monster, Ron and I have become good friends. Ron is a Monster "legacy athlete" and we look after him. Yeah, he's not big-time factory star anymore, but he still oozes that cool, style and charm that made him one of the most charismatic and beloved racers in the 40-year history of U.S. motocross. He never takes anything too seriously and he just plain cracks me up. Ron and I watched Josh Hansen win the opening round of the 2011 AMA West Region SX Series at Anaheim together, and Ron was SO, SO stoked, you'd have thought it was him out there. That's another wonderful thing about Ron – he genuinely LOVES the sport. In fact I'd call him a super-fan."



EVERY DOG HAS IT'S DAY

Shown here skipping through the gnarly whooped-put infield of Daytona International Speedway, Ron Lechien had an excellent supercross season in 1985 winning three races and coming only six points short of winning the title. However, every Dog has its day, and that summer, Lechien rode his #6 Honda to seven AMA National victories, and in doing so, won the 1985 AMA 125cc National Championship. That September, Lechien was chosen to represent Team USA at the Motocross des Nations in Gaillard, West Germany. More than up for the task, Lechien, along with teammates David Bailey and Jeff Ward, rose to the occasion that drizzly, gray day and left Europe with the Peter Chamberlain Trophy



DAVEY COOMBS COMMENTS ON LECHIEN

"I grew up racing with Ronnie Lechien, usually only once a year at the big amateur nationals here. In '81 I actually beat him in a couple of motos at a race in North Carolina, but by 1982 he was way ahead of me. By '83 he was winning nationals and supercross races, and I knew I would be better off going to college!

"Ronnie was so fluid, so fast and so charismatic that he could charm anyone -- even his biggest rivals. Had he stayed on the straight and narrow, it's hard to tell how the careers of Rick Johnson, Johnny O'Mara, David Bailey or even Jeff Ward would have turned out, as far as races and titles won, because I believe that Ronnie Lechien was flat-out better than all of them. He just had no discipline, and he was so easy to like that no one really put their foot down until it was too late. His entire career is a cautionary tale for American motocross."

ABOUT RON LECHIEN

Lechien first burst onto the motocross scene with his smooth fluid riding style when he dominated the 125 Pro class at the legendary Mammoth Mountain race track in 1981. He came from the hotbed of MX El Cajon, CA which was referred to as the El Cajon Zone & produced such legendary riders as early heroes Marty Smith, Marty Tripes, Broc Glover & Marty Moates & then later Rick Johnson, Scott Burnworth & Mike Craig. At the tender age of 16 in 1983 Ron was signed to his first full factory ride at Team Yamaha & went to battle against some of the all time greats in American motocross: Hannah, Bailey, Glover, Barnett, Johnson and Ward. Certainly a daunting task for anyone but even more so to a young 16 year old. Even though he didn't win a title that year he put in some great rides and even won a 250 SX main event at Orlando besides winning 3 125cc Nationals.

Ron went on to ride for Honda as well as Kawasaki later in his career. While Ron only won the 1985 125 National Championship he came close to several more & won many SX as well as outdoor overalls as well as riding on two winning Motocross des Nations teams. When Ron was on it and motivated he could just ride away from the competition with a style and grace that not many have displayed before or since. Anyone who ever saw Ron on one of these days still revels in the fluid effortless style he displayed. A true natural & a motocross legend who burned out much too early due to off the track decisions that Ron has had the courage to work out like a true champion that he is.

MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST MOTORCYCLE?

LECHIEN: My first motorcycle was a Honda QA-50 that my Dad bought for me and my sister to share.

MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST RACE EXPERIENCE LIKE?

LECHIEN: I was very nervous but I think I did fairly well. I got a 5th or something like that.

MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: NAME YOUR 5 FAVORITE TRACKS.

LECHIEN: Unadilla, Mammoth, Mount Morris, Saddleback & Borona.

MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE RACE OF ALL TIME?

LECHIEN: 1988 Motocross des Nations in France.

MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE MX BIKE?

LECHIEN: My 1985 Honda RC-250 Works Bike.

MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: WHO WERE YOUR HEROES OR IDOLS GROWING UP?

LECHIEN: Marty Smith, Bob Hannah, Jimmy Weinert & Tony D.

MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: WHAT ARE YOU UP TOO TODAY?

LECHIEN: I'm part owner of Maxima Racing Lubricants and I work there full time now.

MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: DO YOU STILL RIDE & OR RACE TODAY?

LECHIEN: I still enjoy racing and riding with my friends at a very relaxed pace.

MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: WHO WAS YOUR MOST FEARED RIVAL?

LECHIEN: Rick Johnson and I had a fierce rivalry going in the mid 80's.

MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: WHAT DO YOU THINK OF TODAY'S CURRENT CROP OF RIDERS?

LECHIEN: I think the current riders of today are very talented and skilled in Supercross type jumping.

MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: WHO WAS THE MOST INFLUENTIAL PERSON(S) IN YOUR LIFE?

LECHIEN: I must say that my Dad & my Mom were. My Dad was my mechanic and coach and I could never have made it without him or my mother.

MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: NAME YOUR FAVORITE FOOD.

LECHIEN: Sea Food.

MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: WHAT DID YOU THINK OF THE AMA ALLOWING 400CC 4-STROKES TO RUN IN THE 250 CLASS?

LECHIEN: That's a tough question. I think for the development of the new bikes that it is important to get them into the main stream of AMA competition, but with the weight disadvantage, it's a tossup. »





TITLE BOUT

Ron Lechien was hired by Honda to race in the 1984 Nationals. His primary competitor: Rick Johnson. Bitter rival, adversary and neighbor Rick Johnson. Be it girls, on-track antics or just plain old jealousy. The two riders out and out despised one another and the war started at Gainesville, Florida on March 4. "The 1984 season with RJ in the 250cc class was epic," enthused Lechien. "We were out to kill each other every weekend! Back then there was no such thing as dirty riding - If you could knock someone down, then that was what you tried to do. So there were many times that year that we came together and the fight was on. The sad thing about that year was the last race of the season. It was at Washougal and I was leading the second moto and would win the championship with the win. However, I got tired and RJ reeled me in and took it from me. That one still hurts to this day!"

8 P. III

interview

THE DOGGER
RON LECHIE

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THE ST
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STATE OF PLAY FOR UK TEAMS AND GPS

STEVE DIXON

Words by Steve Dixon > Photo by Ian Roxburgh

BEEN 22 YEARS SINCE I STARTED GPS AND A LOT HAS CHANGED SINCE THEN! TO BE HONEST I'VE LOST ALL OF THEM. ONE THING I NOTICE IN THE UK AT THE MOMENT IS THE LACK OF TEAMS GOING TO GPS FROM THE UK NOW. I DO WATCH THE INTERNET AND READ ALL THE BLURB ABOUT THE GP'S WITH INTEREST AND WHILST PEOPLE THINK I AM PRO YOUTHSTREAM I CAN ASSURE YOU I AM MY OWN PERSON AND HAVE MY OWN VIEW

I think I have come from a solid motocross background and I appreciate all angles of the sport. Having raced in the 80s to a club level in the AMCA and the ACU I used to go to the British GP and Namur, apart from that it was the report in the British MX paper T+MX News where I got to read about our peers in the Motocross World.

I was no factory racer, I was just a welder from a council estate who loved to ride bikes across the field and then fix them to be better. For me the Grand Prix scene has moved on tremendously for the good, and whilst there are grumbles here and there nothing is perfect, times have changed and we as a sport have had to move with the times or die. Yes everyone goes on about the good old days but its not like that anymore, life is not like that. When you go to a football match you sit down and do not stand in terraces getting crushed and people can't smoke where they want (which is good for us non smokers) shops are open on a Sunday and people are obsessed with watching home improvement shows during the week and spending the weekends copying them.

Coupled with closures of tracks and practice land due to more regulations and rules has resulted in smaller bike sales and less money and products to give to the teams. Yes that is the main change in our sport why there are not so many teams coming from the UK.

In the past companies like Yamaha, Suzuki, Kawasaki and Honda gave away huge amounts and so more riders could have the main essentials to go racing at GP level, also I think there were more people who gave up there spare time to help out as a driver or mechanic, but even so there were always parents mainly footing the bill whether it was providing a van, time or tuning parts. Actually in the UK we have a good selection of meetings that run to a high standard and teams are building up some good outside sponsorship and some are coming to the GPs to do the 7 rounds of the Europeans and from there I think they could step it up to the GP's in the future. To pay riders salaries and to buy spares and travelling costs you need money and that money is not coming from the manufacturers so we have to source revenue elsewhere, which is outside the industry. Now cigarette companies funded the good old days and that has gone too.

Hence all the teams needed a good platform to give potential sponsors a viable surrounding in which to advertise their brand and bring clients. The fact of the matter is more people are making a living from the sport than before and riders profiles are higher.

When I was fully supported in the early 90's as a mechanic to Jeremy Whatley we had nothing in the van, no toilet, no shower just spares! It took me all day at the first GP at Swanastadt to make a flat bit of ground to put the bike on and then that got full of water when someone power washed above me. We as teams could still operate in the old style ways, the passion is there but we have all realized to be at the top of a sport at World level you need to be professional when it's someone else's brand and money that is being promoted.

So I believe we are heading in the right direction for the sport and for the future, with what is on offer. There are a good variety of tracks and countries in the GP's at the moment; it is good we are back in the USA. Also the racing is very good and there is some solid depth. The tracks in general are all pretty good and mainly it is the soil that require a little more work to create more lines. The GP riders that go to America are a lot more technical in their riding because now they fit straight into the top positions over there so the track can't be that easy over here. So would the GP scene see more teams from the UK if we were parking in power washed muddy fields and not paying an entry fee? I don't think so, the cost of travel and parts to maybe not qualify and have a sponsor turn up with his wife to sit in a field would only be for the family friend type sponsor. No longer is it just motocross manufacturer appealing to motocross fans, we are dealing with companies like Red Bull and Monster who are used to the professionalism of F1, Indy car and other top sports.

BACK TO THE UK TEAMS

We have some good young teams that have ambition and hopefully over the next few years the Brits will be back in force at the GP's and the British riders will follow. But for the meantime lets cheer on the British riders whatever team and the UK teams of Mark Chamberlain's Honda team, Roger Magee's KTM team and lastly my Yamaha team from the UK. »



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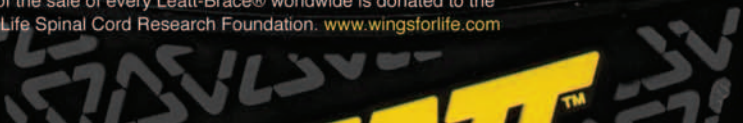
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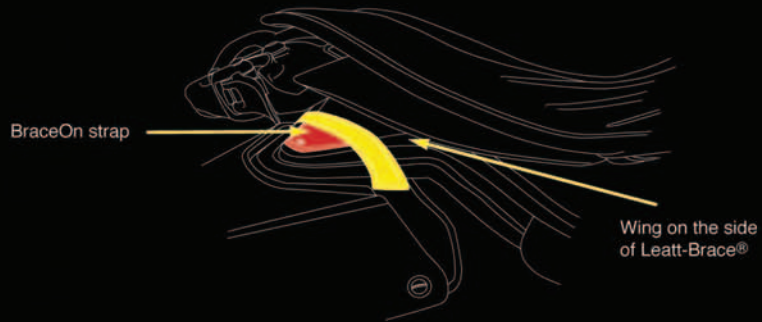
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PAR HONDA TEAM RIDER

[*Brad Anderson*]

**RED BULL
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Brad was part of Team GB
at the MXoN in Colorado, 2010
Main image: Brad took a 1-1 at
Round 7 of the 2010 Red Bull
Pro Nationals at Canada Heights



**BRAD ANDERSON
MOTOCROSS**

Words by Geoff Meyer > Photos by Ian Roxburgh



It's the middle of winter and as most people are starting up their heaters to warm their homes and preparing for their breakfast a lone runner is putting in the miles to prepare himself for the upcoming Motocross season

With the theme of the Rocky movie playing on his iPod he reaches the peak of a hill and throws his arms in the air, punching his fists into the sky then quickly starting the second part of his six mile run.

Motocross riders are hard men and none come any harder than Red Bull Pro Nationals Champion Brad Anderson. Anderson is probably as old school as you can get. Tough as nails, a harder worker, but also somebody who is slightly probably unappreciated for his fighting spirit and never say die style.


We decided to sit down with 'Bad Brad' and ask him about his preparation for what will be one of the most important seasons in his career.

BRAD ANDERSON

VERSION OF ROCKY BALBOA



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MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: Can you explain who Brad Anderson is?

ANDERSON: People look at me like I am an angry person, but if they really got to know me they would look at me differently. Neil Prince didn't know me at first, but now we get on great. If people had a good talk to me they would realize I am a pretty nice guy. People think I'm rough because that's how I am on the track.

MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: Would you say you are just a sweet guy?

ANDERSON: I wouldn't say I am sweet, I don't know how to describe myself, but not sweet (Hahaha).

MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: Did you get much of a chance to hang out with your mates and socialize?

ANDERSON: Not really, the off season before Xmas we enjoy ourselves, about a month of going out and enjoying ourselves with our friends and then it's time to get to the serious work. People can probably see that, but I don't drink through the season and I do go out with my friends in the off-season and have a good drink and go a bit crazy, but I know what my job is and when it comes to training and my racing then I knuckle down and get on with that. I love Motocross and to be honest in the winter I get sick of the drinking.

MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: I remember seeing you at one of the parties at a Motocross of Nations and you were having a pretty good time.

ANDERSON: It was America I think, could have been Italy. After every MXoN they have parties. I was meant to ride in Italy, but I hurt my thumb, so I went to the party at the end. I usually go to the parties at the end of the MXoN, it's the end of the season and time to relax.

MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: What other type of training do you do?

ANDERSON: I have a membership at my local gym and I do loads of cardio, which is what I concentrate on, I don't do many weights because I get arm pump. I went for a six mile run the other day and did it in 30 minutes, so that is pretty good.

MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: How is the hardship of training, do you enjoy it or find it fun?

ANDERSON: To be honest, it's hard by yourself, but you have to think I am going to win the number one plate, or I am going to win a race, but when you are with somebody else it's easier to forget about the running maybe and just get on with it. It's my job at the end of the day and I have to do it 100%.

MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: I have an image of you doing training a bit like Rocky Balboa from the Rocky films, is that far from reality?

ANDERSON: Actually that is one of the songs on my iPod when I run.

Sometimes you get wound up and want to punch in the air, it gets you going. It's a good song. Boxing is good training, but the problem is if I do circuit training I put my back out and I have a system now that it doesn't affect my back as much.

MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: Last time I talked to you were you undecided which team you would ride for in 2011, eventually deciding on PAR Honda. How did that period go for you?

ANDERSON: Well, I had a few offers in the pipeline and when I was looking for a deal it was hard with the economy, but eventually I agreed with my team from last year PAR Honda. I was going to go to Australia, but I just decided to stop here one more year and try and retain my number one status. I was really close to going to Australia, I was going to ride for JTR the KTM team there, they offered me a deal and I wanted more and I probably got a little greedy and we didn't come to a deal, it was a bit of a bummer really. I asked what I thought I was worth, but I probably should have gone with what they wanted, it's a pretty professional team. I was only going to do the Australian scene, I might have done a few races in America, but the plan was to do the Australian series.

MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: How was your winter preparation?

ANDERSON: I went to America with Neil Prince and that went really well, we went for three weeks and we did some testing. Neil has the bike really good. I want to try and get my number one plate back this year. It is really important, before I had my bike turned by a guy but now it's turned that I now ride in a higher gear than I did before. Neil knows a lot of people and gets it sorted pretty well. I think I can get better starts instead of having to fight my way through from the back.

MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: I hear the Red Bull Pro Nationals are also growing, what is your opinion of the series?

ANDERSON: The Red Bull Pro Nationals have some good tracks and it's getting bigger. I want to try and hold that number one plate, it looks good on the television and English teams are looking for Championships and I want to win it again for sure.

MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: Who is going to be the toughest rival this year? Can you pick a rider or two who might be the hardest to race with?

ANDERSON: Every year there is somebody who pops up like Bobryshev last year, but I think it will be Tom (Church), Stephen (Sword), also Martin Barr is coming into the MX1 class, and he could be a threat. I have heard that (Shaun) Simpson will do the first two so that will be interesting how he goes. I just try and concentrate on myself and not think about the others. I don't want to be stupid like last year, I made too many mistakes.

MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: What races will you do in 2011, any GP or AMA Nationals? You mentioned in the past you would like to do that.

ANDERSON: Last year I did a selection, obviously the Red Bull Pro Nationals, and also the British Championship, I want to win both of those series. With the bike how it is thanks to Neil I think that is possible. I want to do Grand Prix's when we have weekends free, maybe a couple, also we want to do the USGP and then the week later we want to do the opening round of the AMA Nationals. There is a guy over there that has a rig and he has a bike and he can maybe help me out, so maybe we can fit that in. We are looking to see if it clashes with anything. To be honest we haven't sat down, but I mean places like France, Holland, Germany the ones that are not too far to ride.

MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: How is it financially for the British riders? Seems like there is more money going around in 2011?

ANDERSON: Red Bull are going to pay more money and the British Championship will pay more, so it looks like it's going to be good, obviously you need to win some races and that is the best way to make good money.

MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: You had a great ride for Great Britain at the 2010 Motocross of Nations. Do you look at being picked again in 2011? It's going to be tough this year, seems to be a lot of good British riders at the moment.

ANDERSON: To be honest it isn't that different from last year. I mean like you said there is Max and Tommy back, but if I ride like I can and I win the number one plates back, then I don't think I will have a problem with getting picked. Guys will hurt themselves again and I think Steve Dixon will pick the best team and I hope I get a shout again.

I hassled Steve Dixon all the time and he was panicking that I wouldn't have a bike out there, but I had already organized all that. I wanted to have everything sorted. I just wanted to be given a chance, because I also missed out in Italy. It took some getting, I had to go out there and show I had the speed and get good results and I think if you have a good ride it opens the door for the following seasons.

MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: I got the feeling we got to see the real Brad Anderson at the MXoN in America. You rode really well and put together some consistent results.

ANDERSON: I passed a lot of good riders like Goncalves and Coppins and I kept passing guys. I know if I could do that at the Motocross of Nations then I can do that at the Grand Prix's. I just haven't had a good go at the Grand Prix's. I have one off races, and last year in Lommel I had a good race, but I had problems. If I do some GP's this year and do well that might open some deals for 2012.

MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: Doesn't seem to be many spots open for an older guy getting into the Grand Prix series anymore. What do you think about that?

ANDERSON: I think it's really hard, I've tried before, now it's easy to get into GP's if you have a few good results then you might get a factory deal, but you have to be a young guy, and I am not a young guy, I am an older rider. I've gone GP's before and nobody from inside the Grand Prix paddock has approached me to do a full GP season.

www.bradandersonmx.co.uk
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BRAD ANDERSON

Brad doing it for his country at the 2010 MXoN

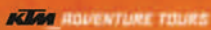
BRAD ANDERSON
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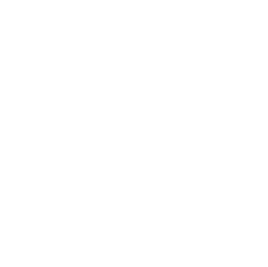
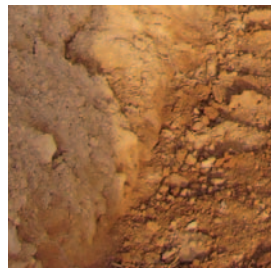


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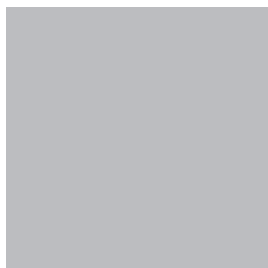
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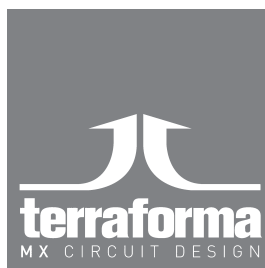




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There is a stunned silence for a while. One of the observers emits a few strange noises, which seem to come from both sides of his body. "Who the blazes was that?" he asks (in slightly more salty terms). "It's Tanel Leok - an up and coming rider from Estonia."

This little interplay, dear reader, is more than loosely based on the truth. It happened way back in 2001, just a day before a fuzzy-faced Tanel Leok, just a smidgen over sixteen years old, wrestled his 125cc machine to his first top 10 GP result - 6th to be exact. The mention of the word "Estonia" sent the gates of incomprehension crashing down in the minds of more than half of the group. It sounded for all the world like a description of the rocky surface of Teutschenthal, not the name of a country.

The youngster was no stranger to quiet, unassuming achievement by then, either. The trophy cabinet back at home was groaning under the weight of two junior world championship trophies, one for the 85cc class and one for the 125cc junior class. The pin had been released. Tanel Leok would soon race Estonia well into mainstream motocross consciousness with his unconventional, no-nonsense style.

Once the world perked up and took notice, some curious facts started to filter through. Avo Leok had by then won a GP, and was to win another before serious injury tragically ended his racing career, and as the years rolled by, Tanel's star was on the rise and rise. Not only that, but fellow clansmen Aigar and Martin Leok were making their presence felt at international racing level as well. It seemed for all the world that the genetic material over at the Leok compound consisted of two parts two stroke oil to one part breeding matter.

Once the public eye started to understand the "EST" or "EE" next to a rider's name, an interesting picture emerged. For a nation of some 1.4 million people, the same number that are, for instance, looking for parking in your street if you were living in London, Estonia is represented in international motocross racing way beyond its proportional share. Not all of these riders were or are household names in world championship terms, but scan through international results of recent years, and names like Nassar, Kuusk, Uusna, Triisa, Magi, Roosio and many others will pop up with regularity, all coupled to the letters "EST" and the ubiquitous Blue-White-Black. And it's not just Estonia, either. Latvia has its Matiss Karro and a spattering of young talent, and Lithuania is making its voice heard too.

This is more than a fluke - it is a trend. A steady stream of talent keeps pouring into the motocross pool out of the Baltic. Why, then? A visit to Estonia is instructional. Most international MX racers who are fortunate enough to have experienced Estonian hospitality and race passion, would have done so first at the annual Somerpalu motocross. This event is held in Leok heartland, usually between the Latvian - and Swedish GP's. One glance over the crowd reveals a lot already. For such a tiny event, the race attracts a vocal, enthusiastic throng that will put to shame many mainstream events.

The invited stars are there, of course, and each year more and

more of them tout for the invitation. But waddle through the pits and check out the locals, the bread and butter racers, the salt of the earth. The race kit is sometimes threadbare, the bikes often held together by no more than the proverbial piece of wire and a prayer, but the passion is there in buckets. Whatever curve balls life throw at them, they make a plan. The well-funded racers are there too, but whatever the circumstances, you can be sure of one thing - these folks have racing fuel coursing through their very veins. Getting to international races more often than not involves Hannibal-like travels, and by the time you've done that, you don't feel like returning home with a poor result in the pocket. These are the riders that, when temperatures dip to 30 below zero, fit spikes to their tyres and go racing. These riders are driven, motivated, the hard men of motocross.

Indulge me as I illustrate the point with two real-life stories:

- During a recent trip to Estonia, a friend invited me to slip across to Avo Leok's training facility to see a young local rider in action. By the time we arrived, it was sniping cold, and the bikes had been packed away already. Jan Jakobson listened to the reason for our visit, and in a flash, the bike was out of the trailer and on the icy ground again. Only two bricks and a tickey high, he wrung the neck of his little 65cc machine with skill and passion, and one lap was enough to convince one that the tap of talent has not closed yet.

- A good few years ago, a very young rider out of Estonia politely, but confidently emailed to ask some advice about tuning, bike set-up and other racing related matters. I helped him with some contacts, and within a mum of time, he had made all the arrangements by himself, talking to suppliers, arranging transport, customs, and payments. Not bad going for an 11 year old dealing in a strange language with suppliers from another country.

I came to admire Janno Schmidt's grit, determination and work ethic. He is not blessed with a bucketful of resources, but he makes the best of what a single parent household can offer him, and he is always giving his best at the races. When an opportunity arose to participate in an international supercross race, he grasped the chance with both hands, and so impressed his backers that he now finds himself with a ride in a German team.

Not everyone can make it to the top in motocross, this much is true. Some talents come and go, and many will fall by the wayside. A prospective sponsor could do worse than booking a cheap flight and checking out the talent in the Baltic though. There is an abundance of the Right Stuff around.

Over in world championship headquarters, Tanel Leok must feel a glow of satisfaction in his quiet manner. He has long championed the virtues of the Estonian motocross scene, and as the chief exponent, he can not but be happy about his country's rise in the world hierarchy. He has rightfully earned the appellation The Estonian Express, and ranks amongst the very best in the world. At the current rate, by the time he is ready to park his locomotive, there will come another chugging along to take the story further. «



Tanel and Aigar - Brothers in arms! > Photo courtesy of Tinus Nel

FIM MOTOCROSS WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP



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MONSTER ENERGY FIM WORLD MOTOCROSS CHAMPIONSHIP GP PREVIEW

Starting in Sevlievio, Bulgaria and racing through countries like Holland, Belgium, Spain, Italy, America, Brazil, France, England, Sweden, Latvia, Germany, Portugal, Czech Republic and Italy the FIM World Motocross Championship continues to improve and with the leadership of FIM and Youthstream the sport remains in good hands

Story by Geoff Meyer > Images Ray Archer, Gary Freeman and Frank Hoppen

This year's MX1 and MX2 Championships are really looking likely to be exciting and we decided to ask two of the legends of the sport Eric Geboers and Dave Thorpe their opinion on who will be the guy to beat in both MX1 and MX2. We also asked leading British rider in the MX1 class Shaun Simpson his opinion. Eric Geboers is a 5-times World Motocross Champion and winner of 39 GP's in his career. He is also one of the most colorful riders the sport has seen. Now team manager of the Rockstar Suzuki factory team Geboers knows more about the sport than most and gives us his opinion of what to expect in 2011.



Jeffrey Herlings having pre-season fun
in the sand on his Red Bull KTM
> Photo by Gary Freeman



FIM WORLD MOTOCROSS CHAMPIONSHIP GP PREVIEW

MOTOCROSS ILLUSTRATED: Eric, can you give me your opinion on what will happen in the MX1 class in 2011?

GEBOERS: Based on the information what I have now it will be similar to the MX1 last year. I think everyone will be aiming for Cairoli and I am sure Clement Desalle has improved his condition since last winter; he will be a level up from 2010. Of course we have guys like De Dycker who is on a new bike and new team and most important I think he has a big motivation, because he has creating his own area. Steve (Ramon) will be the same as always, he is always ready. I don't expect too many other surprises.

MX ILL: You don't rank Ben Townley with those guy's, who not?

GEBOERS: Well, Townley is switching from bike and series; it's not going to be easy. I don't think Townley will be a surprise for us. He might surprise some day, but I think his consistency will not be there.

MX ILL: I noticed looking at the Suzuki images that Clement looks really strong, thinner than in 2010?

GEBOERS: Clement is working on his condition and he needs to work on that. He is sharper, and in general is better. You have to understand that the Desalle family came to the point in this sport on a certain way. They also realize if they want to improve more they have to take the next step on professional preparation as well.

MX ILL: I remember looking at Tyla Rattray at the start of 2008 and he was really in a zone. Do riders need to be in that zone to be ready, is Clement in that zone?

GEBOERS: I think some guys need to be in that zone, Tyla is one of them, but on the other hand some riders improve better if they are not in that zone and that has to be based on the rider, not everyone is the same. Steve (Ramon) doesn't need to be in that zone, he is open minded.

MX ILL: What about the MX2 class?

GEBOERS: Of course like most of the people I will be looking at Ken Roczen. See how he does, how he makes the switch to the orange bike, what he can get away with. I don't think that will be so easy. I saw him racing Supercross in America and I don't think he performed as he did on the Suzuki. Maybe he has adapted since he has arrived back in Europe, but then again he is again coming into a new team, because the KTM team in America is different to the team in Europe.

MX ILL: I remember talking to you once and you mentioned how difficult you found the change from Suzuki to Honda. How difficult is that change?

GEBOERS: Changing teams is really big, because 80% of your habits need to be tuned. If you think about changing gears, or tires or when you go training. Now when you make these decisions you usually have to call a different person or two different people. You have to have approvals and the whole structure it gives you a month of stress to get into the structure, and then you have the performance of the bike. You have been through this before where you find your settings and then you have your favorite setting, but then you get into a new team and you have to start all over again. If you have 2060 different possibilities with combinations and you have to start all over again, then it depends on who guides you through that puzzle. It's not always good to have too many possibilities.

MX ILL: Will this give Herlings and advantage; can he get closer to Roczen in 2011?

GEBOERS: I haven't seen Jeffrey riding since his injuries, I think he is okay, he is young and he will be motivated.

MX ILL: Can anyone else hang with Ken?

GEBOERS: Consistently I don't see anyone else being able to hang with Ken. Some guys might do it, but it's difficult to say now, we need to see the first Grand Prix.



Antonio Cairoli testing the KTM
> Photo by Gary Freeman



FIM WORLD MOTOCROSS CHAMPIONSHIP GP PREVIEW



SIMPSON COMMENTS

Shaun Simpson is going to be the most supporters' British rider in the MX1 class. Riding for the LS Honda team he will be coming into the class and hoping to finish with some podiums and top fives. We asked him what he expects from the MX1 and MX2 classes in 2011.

In MX2 I would really like to see Tommy mix it with the KTM guys, I would hate to see Roczen and Herlings just run away with it. Although Van Horebeek might be riding better than he has been in previous years, I think he will be in the shadows of Roczen and Herlings. I would love to see Tommy for the British side up there and I think that he can do that. He has ridden strong and he is back after a couple of years and he is riding for fun again. I think Tommy is my wild card for MX2, I mean everyone is putting their money on Roczen and Herlings.

MX1 – I wouldn't like to pick one, obviously Cairoli, Desalle, Ramon, Nagl, I like to see myself up there sometimes. It's going to be tough to pick anyone though. I mean Phillippaerts can be in there, so many fast guys. If you look at past results from MX1, it's tough, I mean MX2 there will be guys who can be up there, but actually winning motos and GP's MX1 has so many riders. I mean you have Phillippaerts, Cairoli, Desalle, Ramon, then guys like De Dycker, Barragan, Pourcel, all those guys. All it takes for some of these guys if one of two of them gets a good start then they can build on that for the season.



Shaun Simpson heading for the top step of the podium at the opening round of the British Motocross Championship
> Photo by Ray Archer

MONSTER ENERGY

FIM WORLD MOTOCROSS CHAMPIONSHIP GP PREVIEW

Dave Thorpe is the greatest British Motocross rider of all time. With three World 500cc Championships and 22 Grand Prix victories he is a legend of the sport and also one of the most approachable legends of the sport. Always polite and friendly his legend grows in his retirement.

MX ILL: Dave, how are you looking at the 2011 FIM World Motocross Championship?

THORPE: I am really looking forward to it. The over view that FIM decided to create the age limit in MX2 and making MX1 the major class it's made for better racing.

MX ILL: What about the MX2 class, what do you expect and what are you looking forward to?

THORPE: MX2 obviously being a Brit I want Tommy to be in there. I think he will be in there, I think he will be in the thick of it. The KTM boys (Roczen and Herlings) will be tough to beat, well organized and ready. The Rinaldi boy (Gautier Paulin) will be in there somewhere. If I had to say who will be Champion it will be one of those four, the rider who doesn't get injured, which will be the key. Anyone of those four is capable Grand Prix's and the Championship. If you look from the outside looking in with Roczen, you don't get that type of talent coming in very often, he is a huge talent. For me Herlings is quietly going about his business under the radar, he has more motivation to beat his team-mate. All the promotion that Roczen is getting now will motivate him to beat his team-mate. From Tommy's side many people think he might have lost some speed, but I don't believe that. Tommy will come out fighting and he will be a match for them. It's not going to be the fastest guy who wins; it will be the smartest guy. Like I said, Roczen, boys like that don't come along often. When he went to America I sort of thought would he do okay, or wouldn't he and he proved he did okay. There is nothing in front of him that he can't deal with. He will be hard to beat, but it will be one of the four I mentioned.

MX ILL: What about MX1?

THORPE: MX1, I think it will be between Tony (Cairolì), (Clement) Desalle and David (Phillipsaerts). I really don't think anyone else can race with those guys for the Championship. I don't think anyone else will get enough wins to fight for the Championship.

MX ILL: What about Ben Townley?

THORPE: Had you asked me in December or January I probably would have put him in with the other three and I feel for him, he's had some tough hits and with his accident with breaking his jaw he will probably come here highly motivated, but not prepared as he maybe wants to be. We all know to be a World Champion you have to be consistent from day one. Because of the schedule and the fact you don't get much of a chance to have a big break, and with him coming into the series coming off two injuries, it's going to be tough. I might be wrong; he might come out and surprise us all.



GRAND PRIX CALENDAR 2011

April 10 - BULGARIA - Sevlievo, Bulgaria

April 25 (Monday) - THE NETHERLANDS - Valkenswaard, The Netherlands

May 15 - USA - San Bernardino, CA

May 22 - BRAZIL - Indiantuba, Brazil

June 5 - FRANCE - St. Jean d'Angely, France

June 12 - PORTUGAL - Agueda, Portugal

June 19 - SPAIN - Bellpuig, Spain

July 3 - SWEDEN - Uddevalla, Sweden

July 10 - GERMANY - Teutschenthal, Germany

July 17 - LATVIA - Kegums, Latvia

July 31 BELGIUM - Lommel, Belgium

August 7 - CZECH REPUBLIC - Loket, Czech Republic

August 21 - GREAT BRITAIN - Matterly Basin

September 4 - TBA - TBA

September 11 - ITALY - Fermo, Italy

2011 FIM Motocross of Nations - 25 September - St Jean d'Angely, France



Ken Roczen enjoying his time in the USA
> Photo by Frank Hoppen

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